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ABSTRACT

This project was designed to bridge the gap between the home and school by sending family assistants into the homes of potential dropouts and youngsters whose school work and behavior are not satisfactory. One hundred and two family assistants acting with schools' attendance coordinators, deans, and guidance personnel, work with pupils whose records and school behavior indicate that they are not achieving their potential or that they are becoming slipshod about attendance and punctuality. They visit the homes immediately in the event of infractions of regulations or other failures. Visitations serve to inform the parents of what to expect from the school and what to do to help their chilren achieve. The family assistants are recruited from the target neighborhoods and serve 28 schools throughout the city. When school time visits are not feasible they make them on the weekend or in the evening. The School-Home Contact Program varies in practice, somewhat, from school to school. In some schools, the family assistant contacts parents once and sets up appointments with the professional school staff, e.g., counselors, principals, and teachers. In other schools, the family assistant works with the parents more extensively. The evaluation study utilized five samples: one involving school personnel, three students, and one of parents. (Author/JM)

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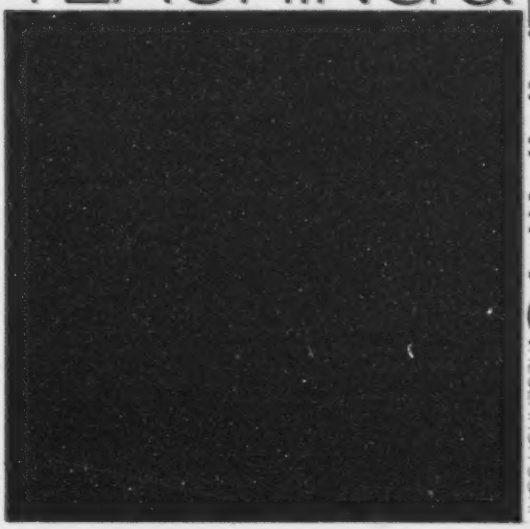

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SCHOOL-HOME
CONTACT PROGRAM

1972-1973

Board of Education of the
City of New York

FINAL REPORT

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FINAL REPORT

SCHOOL-HOME CONTACT PROGRAM

An evaluation of a New York City school district educational project funded by the New York State Urban Education Program enacted at the 1970 legislative session of the New York State Legislature for the purpose of "meeting special educational needs associated with poverty." (Education Law 3602, subdivision 11 as amended.) Performed under contract with the Board of Education with the City of New York for the 1972-73 school year.

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CHAPTER I

SCHOOL-HOME CONTACT PROGRAM

Summary

This project starting September 11, 1972, ending June 30, 1973, is designed to bridge the gap between the home and school by sending family assistants into the homes of potential dropouts and youngsters whose school work and behavior are not satisfactory. Family assistants acting with schools' attendance coordinators, deans and guidance personnel, work with pupils whose records and school behavior indicate that they are not achieving their potential or that they are becoming slipshod about attendance and punctuality. They visit the homes immediately in the event of infractions of regulations or other failures. Visitations serve to inform the parents of what to expect from the school and what to do to help their children achieve. The family assistants are recruited from the target neighborhoods and serve twenty-eight schools throughout the city. When school time visits are not feasible they make them on the weekend or in the evening. The schools participating in this School-Home Contact Program are:

Brooklyn:

1. Boys'
2. Canarsie
3. East New York Vocational
4. Eastern District
5. Fort Hamilton
6. Franklin K. Lane
7. George Wingate
8. Lafayette
9. Prospect Heights
10. Sheepshead Bay
11. South Shore
12. Thomas Jefferson
13. William Maxwell Vocational

Bronx:

1. DeWitt Clinton
2. James Monroe
3. Samuel Gompers
4. Walton
5. William Howard Taft

Queens:

1. Forest Hills
2. Francis Lewis
3. Grover Cleveland
4. John Adams
5. John Bowne
6. Martin Van Buren

Manhattan:

1. Benjamin Franklin
2. Central Commercial
3. Haaren
4. Julia Richman

The selection and screening of the staff is conducted by the individual school administrations. The Board of Education personnel provide in-service training for the family assistants.

The School-Home Contact Program varies in practice, somewhat, from school to school. In some schools, the family assistant contacts parents once and sets up appointments with the professional school staff, e.g. counselors, principals, and teachers. In other schools, the family assistant works with the parents more extensively. There are 102 family assistants included in the study.

Program Objectives

It is anticipated that between the school and the parents, better communication will produce the following results:

1. To bridge the gap between the school and home.
2. To provide parents in the home with needed information of their children and their problems, in order to help solve the difficulty.
3. To feed back to the school staff needed information from the home that will help an adjustment of pupil problems and in giving needed services.
4. To develop positive attitudes of problem students and their parents toward school and related activities.
5. To reduce the number of dropouts.

General Description of Samples and Populations

There were essentially five kinds of samples or populations needed to accomplish the evaluation objectives of this study; one involving school personnel, three students and one of parents.

Coordinators of High School Programs

Of the school personnel, of course, all 28 administrators directly responsible for implementing the School-Home Contact Program in each school as well as at the Board level needed to be and were contacted for their views.

School Staff

In addition, in each school several administrators, including principals and/or assistant principals, counselors, attendance and class cutting coordinators, teachers and deans, people who were directly involved in the program also needed to be contacted. In each school at least 1.5% such school personnel were contacted for a total sample of 42.

Student Sample I

Two samples of students who were serviced by family assistants also needed to be contacted; one for their perceptions about the program and their involvement, the other to gather records data on achievement, absences, and dropout status. Of course, the first, requiring the gathering of student perceptions, needed to be done as close to their being serviced by family assistants as possible. It would be logistically difficult and often impossible to gather representative data from students serviced months or years prior to their being serviced by family assistants. In addition, research has generally shown that memory, time and extent of intervening events often color or modify responses. Since students could be serviced early in the year with several months lapsing before the end of school in June, many such students would transfer, dropout or again have their views modified by intervening events. This again meant that students needed to be contacted quickly after being serviced. However, since Teaching & Learning Research Corp. could not begin to contact students until after being approved by the Board of Education as the evaluation agency and arrangements for entry into the schools could be made and approved by each of the high schools and approved instruments could be developed in accord with specifications outlined in the contracted Evaluation Design, a larger percentage sample of students was needed than would have been the case if students could have been contacted beginning in September of the school year. Hence, it was decided in accord with the Evaluation Design to initiate contact, i.e., provide a questionnaire to or interview every student seen by a family assistant, following approval of TLRC as the evaluating agency, three weeks to develop instruments with school personnel and approval by the high schools could be obtained, up to three weeks prior to the end of the school year. Obviously, because of prior commitments and unique problems some schools could not be visited as soon as others, hence a variation in the numbers of students contacted varied among the twenty-eight high schools in the study. It was also necessary to end the collection of such data three weeks prior to the end of school so that all information could be processed and this report prepared for submission in early July. Fourteen hundred questionnaires, one for each student to be

serviced by a family assistant, were placed with each school program coordinator, along with a self-addressed stamped envelope. Family assistants were instructed to give the evaluation questionnaires (see Appendix B) and envelope to each student serviced. A total number of 314 questionnaires were received by TLRC. According to school records 4,928 students were serviced during the period described above. Therefore we conclude that while nearly all students were contacted, 23 percent chose to respond.

Student Sample II

The second sample had to be much larger because it was necessary to follow the entire population of students served throughout the entire school year in order to obtain information on dropout status, attendances and achievement. A total of four thousand nine hundred and twenty-eight students (4,928), sixty-six percent (66%) of the names provided TLRC as being serviced by family assistants were included in this sample. In order to draw this two-thirds sample, from name lists provided by the schools, every third name was skipped. In accordance with the Evaluation Design this sixty-six percent was deemed to be adequately representative to describe dropout rates, absenteeism and achievement.

Student Sample III

A third sample, one depending on the gathering of information on students over a two year period, was also obtained. This sample, compared students on achievement and attendance during last school year (1971-72) when they were serviced by family assistants with the prior year (1970-71) when they were not so serviced. While not contracted for in this evaluation study, the fact that this added information was available through the cooperation of individual school and Board personnel, meant that added assessments of the functioning of the program in terms of its stated objectives could be provided. There were 900 students in this sample, 50 drawn from each of 19 high schools which were able to cooperate in this part of the study.

Parent Sample

The parent sample in this study was drawn on the same basis as student sample number one, above. In this case, family assistants were given evaluation questionnaires and self-addressed stamped envelopes which were to be given to all parents seen during the period described under sample one, above. A total of 427 were received by TLRC. In addition, 406 parents were contacted for direct interviews by TLRC evaluation staff as a cross-check on any potential differences in patterns of response between questionnaires and interviews. There were no discernable or distinct differences.

Chapter II

EVALUATION OBJECTIVES AND PROCEDURES

In order to assess the extent to which the School-Home Contact Program achieved its program objectives as stated in Chapter I, the following procedures as specified in the Evaluation Design* were followed:

A. Evaluation Objective 1: Assessing whether program helps bridge gap between school and home.

A1. Samples: A Seventy-eight (78%) probability sample of 862 students and their parents from the population of 1,102 students referred to Family Assistants during the period TLRC was the approved evaluation agency were administered questions in interview (N = 548) and questionnaire form (N = 314) to assess the extent they perceived the program as "bridging a gap" between the school and the home. Every student in order of referral was given a questionnaire or interviewed until a total of 20-35 per school, for a total of 862 were contacted. This sample excluded only those referred in the last month of the program and those serviced prior to the approval of TLRC by the Board of Education and individual high school administrators to interview students and/or administer questionnaires. It was deemed difficult to assess the effects of being serviced in the waning weeks of the program and, furthermore, would have deferred a final evaluation report until late summer or fall when follow-up data were available which was beyond contract requirements. Variations in response by item ranged from N = 832 to 862.

A2. Methods and Procedures: The students and parents were asked the following questions, relevant to whether the School-Home Contact Program helped bridge the gap between school and home. It was necessary to also use a French questionnaire because of language deficiency. (See Appendix B.) These questions were developed and approved by Teaching & Learning Research Corp. and the Coordinator of the School-Home Contact Program. In addition, all 28 high school coordinators of the program approved their use.

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* Evaluation Design: School-Home Contact Program, Function No. 17-36464, B/E 147133-1-10. Bureau of Educational Research, Board of Education of the City of New York, August, 1972.

Basic questions asked of students and their parents in regard to school-home contact were:

1. Parent Q: Does the Family Assistant let you know when your child has problems at school?

   Answer: Yes_____ No_____ Don't Know_____

2. Student Q: Does the Family Assistant let your parents know when you have problems at school?

   Answer: Yes_____ No_____ Don't Know_____

It was reasoned that by asking and receiving corroborating information from both parents and students, a more valid assessment could be made. In addition it was decided to ask the referred students and their parents to report the actual number of times they were spoken to by a Family Assistant in their home or in school. If those referred indicated that they were in fact in contact with Family Assistants, then this would provide further corroboration that school personnel (Family Assistants) were in fact functioning in a role bringing the family into closer contact with the school.

Each subject, student and parent was also invited to respond to an open-ended question asking for any comments they cared to make about the program. Such responses to an unstructured question were designed to provide TLRC evaluation staff with more qualitative information to support or reject the quantitative findings.

A3. Statistical and Qualitative Analysis: Frequency distributions were calculated and are reported in the next chapter on student and parent responses to questions of whether the Family Assistants let the parents of serviced students know when their children have problems in school. The average number of visits by Family Assistants, as reported by students and their parents are also reported and compared with such statistical information obtained in previous years.

A qualitative assessment is further provided by tabulating comments made by students and their parents in response to open-ended questions to cite any strengths or weaknesses they see in the program. Illustrative comments relevant to bridging the gap between school and home are reported in the next chapter.

A4. Time Schedule: Immediately after TLRC was approved by the Board of Education (February 1973) to evaluate the School-Home Contact Program, contact was made with Board personnel responsible for coordinating and implementing the program and within two weeks the instruments were developed. The third week approval was sought and obtained from the high school administrators and coordinators and plans were made for collecting the necessary data. Beginning in the fourth week, data instruments were administered to students and parents serviced within 4 weeks of the end of the school year.

Data on these subjects were collected in the last weeks of the program to allow maximum availability of information. A schedule for TLRC evaluation staff to visit each school in the later period of the school year to gather records data was also arranged and compiled.

B. Evaluation Objective 2: Assessment of whether programs provide parents with needed information.

B1. Samples: The same parent subjects acted under Section A above (a 78% sample) were asked to respond to questions regarding whether they believed that parents were provided information that they need about their children's school behaviors and achievements.

B2. Methods and Procedures: Parents were asked in interview or questionnaires to respond to the following questions. By comparing questionnaires and interview responses it was possible to assess whether there were response patterns unique to the mode of data collection.

1. Parent Q: Does the Family Assistant keep you well informed about how your child (children) is doing in school?

   Answer: Yes_____ No_____ Don't Know_____

2. Student Q: Does the Family Assistant keep your parents well informed about how you are doing in school?

   Answer: Yes_____ No_____ Don't Know_____

B3. Statistical and Qualitative Analysis: Frequency distributions of parent responses to the above questions are reported in the next chapter. In addition, comments, both negative and positive, to unstructured solicitations for their views of the program, relevant to the objective of providing parents with needed information, were tabulated. Illustrative comments and their proportional occurrence are reported in the next chapter.

B4. Time Schedule: The interviews and questionnaires were administered in the final quarter of the school year.

C. Evaluation Objective 3: Assessment of whether needed information is given to school staff to help them assist students.

C1. Subjects: All 28 high school coordinators of the program plus 42 administrators, attendance coordinators, teachers and counselors directly working with the program were contacted for their views in regard to school staff being provided needed information from the home that aides them in helping students to better adjust to school.

C2. Methods and Procedures: The above school staff (N = 70) were asked in structured interviews or questionnaires to respond to the following questions. These questions were developed by TLRC and the Coordinator of the School-Home Contact Program and were approved by the school administrators of each high school.

Staff Question:

Does the Family Assistant provide needed information to school staff which is useful in helping students to better adjust to school?

Answer: Yes_____ No_____

In addition, unsolicited letters by school staff to TLRC or the Board of Education, Bureau of Attendance, regarding the above evaluation objective are reported for added qualitative insights into administrator perceptions.

C3. Statistical and Qualitative Analysis: Frequency distributions of staff responses to the above questions were reported in the next chapter along with a description of staff recommendations.

C4. Time Schedule: Staff data relevant to the questions cited under C2 above were gathered during April and May, 1973.

D. Evaluation Objective 4: Assessment of whether program contributes to more positive attitudes on the part of parents and students toward school.

D1. Subjects: The same subjects discussed under A1 above constituted the sample for this evaluation objective. (78% sample.)

D2. Method and Procedures: The following questions were developed by TLRC and the Coordinator of the School-Home Contact Program, Board of Education, and administered with the approval of the administrations and coordinators in each high school of the study.

Student Questions:

1. Do you think you are getting along better with teachers since you have been working with the Family Assistant?

Answer: Yes ____ No _____ Don't Know _____

2. Do you seem to be getting along better with other students since you have been working with the Family Assistant?

Answer: Yes_____ No_____ Don't Know_____

3. Are you more interested in school subjects since you have been working with the Family Assistant?

Answer: Yes_____ No_____ Don't Know_____

Parent Questions:

1. Do you think your child (children) seem to be getting along better with teachers since you have been working with the Family Assistant?

Answer: Yes_____ No_____ Don't Know_____

2. Do they (your child or children) seem to be getting along better with other students since you have been working with the Family Assistant?

Answer: Yes_____ No_____ Don't Know_____

3. Do you think that your child (children) is more interested in their school subjects since you have been working with the Family Assistant?

Answer: Yes_____ No_____ Don't Know_____

In addition, qualitative judgments made by the subjects in response to open-ended questions to provide any comments which were relevant to the above objective were tabulated.

D3. Statistical and Qualitative Analysis: Frequency distributions of student and parent responses to the above questions are reported in the next chapter along with illustrations of positive and negative comments from the student and parent samples.

D4. Time Schedule: The data collection followed the same schedule reported in A4 above.

E. Evaluation Objective 5: Assessment of whether the program helps to reduce the number of dropouts.

In collaboration with Board personnel responsible for the program, attendance coordinators, and high school coordinators of Family Assistants, a number of criteria were developed to assess the holding power of the program. These criteria included actual dropout rates of those referred, changes in absenteeism rates before and after being serviced, academic achievements before and after being serviced, and the evaluations of the program made by participating staff, parents and students.

E1. Samples: There were three major longitudinal samples used in this part of the study. One sample of 950 students (50 students each from 19 high schools) allowed a comparison of pre and post program effects for students serviced during the spring of 1972. This sample data was originally collected by the Bureau of Attendance and made available to TLRC for use in this study.

The second longitudinal sample of 850 students (50 students from each of 17 high schools) provided data also comparing student attendance and passing of subjects before and after being serviced by Family Assistants was also provided by the Bureau of Attendance. In this sample the pre period covered between September 1971 to January 1972 while the post period covered from September 1972 to January 1973. TLRC evaluation staff checked all tabulations provided by the Bureau of Attendance for accuracy.

The third major population (obtained from school records by TLRC) included all students referred to the program from January 1, 1973 through May 1973 of the school year. From this population of 4,928 students, every third one was excluded leaving a 66% probability sample of 4,928 students.

Dropout data were obtained on this population and compared with dropout data for the schools provided by the Bureau of Attendance. Not all of this population has complete records data available to assess absenteeism and number of subjects passed. There were sufficient school records data on 2,236 students. There were comparable and sufficient pre and post data for assessing changes in proportion of subjects passed for 2,456 students.

E2. Statistical Analysis and Procedures: Statistical analysis involve the use of correlated t tests for differences in means and proportion with alpha level set at the .05 level.

E3. Time Period: After the end of the school year all 28 schools were visited, data was gathered and analysis conducted.

Chapter III

Findings

The findings are presented in this chapter in the same order as are the program and evaluation objectives presented in the previous chapters.

A. Bridging the Gap

As shown in Table 1, clearly the overwhelming proportion of both parents (75.9%) and students (72.2%) indicated that the family assistants let the parents know when their children are having problems in school. In other words, the parents are having added surveillance over their children when they exhibit serious absenteeism, achievement or behavior problems in school and are referred to family assistants.

Table 1: Parent and Student Assessments of Whether Family Assistants Let Parents Know When Their Children Have Problems in School

	Lets Parents Know When Student Has Problems in School		
	Don't Know %	No %	Yes %
Parent Responses N = 832 Students	5.9	18.2	75.9
Student Responses N = 862 Students	10.3	17.4	72.2

Similar to last year's evaluation study, a list of referrals whose families had been contacted by family assistants was obtained from school records. The probability sample of parents when interviewed or administered questionnaires in the Spring 1973, verified (94%) that they had contact with family assistants (See Table 2). In addition, the average number of visits per family was 2.48, about the same as for school year 1971-72.

Table 2: Average Number of Times Family Assistants Have Been to Parents' Home or Spoken With Parents in School: Based on Parent Responses, Current and Past Years

	1970-1971		1971-72		1972-73	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Parents Confirm Visit of Family Assistants	180	77%	180	92%	832	94.1%
Average No. of Visits per Family	11.1		2.2		2.48	

Clearly the family assistants did, in fact, function in their intended and official role to make contacts with the families of students referred to them.

Additional findings reported under the following sections also support the general assessment drawn here, that family assistants in 1972-73 have helped to bridge a gap between parents and school.

Illustrative Parent Comments: Bridging the Gap

It is clear from parent responses to an open-ended question asking them to assess the program that most parents feel that their experiences with family assistants helped to bridge felt gaps between themselves and their children's schools. The following are illustrative parent comments.

"The program lets parents know that someone at school really cares."
"I feel we get a better understanding of what is going on in school."
"Parents are taking more of an interest in their child's school and the (School-Home Contact) program must be helping the school too."
"The family assistant has been very good to me and I appreciate what the school is doing."
"The program will better the family's understanding of the school."
"The family assistants give a lot of help to parents and children."

In only a few cases, as where the parents work w[illegible] the School-Home Contact Program negatively rated. For example, one parent responded:

> "I am a working mother, who is never home when the assistant comes. I have never met my family assistant to my knowledge. The idea is a good one if I could meet the assistant."

In a few other cases, again of working parents, the following type of comment was made:

> "I always meet my neighbors after the Family Assistant has been here bearing the news and messages. I do believe that whatever the Family Assistant's duties are they should be between the assistant, the child and the parent and not include the neighbors. I can be reached at work (telephone number given) and I will come to school any day I am called."

While the students responded relatively less with reference to whether the program helped bridge the gap between their school and their parents, what comments they did make in this regard were positive. The following are illustrative:

"I guess it helped that she (the family assistant) came to my house and talked to my mother."

"It stopped my cutting classes when she called my parent. My parents liked that."

Only about one in sixty students made any negative comments to the unstructured question. The following are illustrative.

"They don't try to help me in no way."

"Never met her before."

"I never heard of it."

In even these few illustrative cases of negative student comments, some of the students' parents may still view the family assistants as a channel for contact with the school. As reported in Table 1, ten point three percent (10.3%) of the students did not know or were unaware of contact between their parents and family assistants as compared to only 5.9% of the parents who could not remember or denied such contact.

In summary, the general assessment that the program in 1972-73 helped to bridge the gap between parents and school was further supported by the large proportion of unsolicited and favorable responses made by both parents and students.

B. Provides Needed Information to Parents

Similar to the findings reported in the previous section, both parents (73.1%) and students (77.3%) tended to indicate that the parents were kept well informed about how their children were doing in school.

Table 3: Parent and Student Assessments of Whether the Family Assistants Keep the Parents Well Informed About How Their Children are Doing in School

	Keeps Parents Informed		
	Don't Know %	No %	Yes %
Parent Responses N = 832 Students	5.1	21.7	73.1
Student Responses N = 862 Students	7.7	15	77.3

Illustrative Parent Comment: Needed Information

As in the case of bridging the gap between school and home, most parents indicated that a chief asset of the program was that it provided information they needed about their children in school. The following are illustrative parent comments in this regard.

"I was made aware of a problem I knew nothing off. The family assistant takes time to get to the bottom of problems."

"I am being made aware of my child's work and am more understanding now of the problem."

"This program is the best way to inform parents about the problems of their children in school."

"The program informs people on what their children are doing in school."

"The program seems to be the only (good) way we are able to communicate with this school."

"We find out from the family assistants when our children attend school."

Only a few parents (6) said they did not get needed information. Illustrative of these remarks is the following parent comment.

> I really cannot answer the question. . . . On March 28, I had my first contact with a family assistant. She called me on the phone about the absences of my daughter. We spoke about a few things in general about children in school today but I didn't learn much. However, I believe that staying in touch with the family assistant may prove helpful in the future.

Illustrative Student Comments: Needed Information

Students tended to be less responsive to open-ended questions about their or their parents' experiences than did the parents. However, similar to their parents, the students tended to emphasize that the major advantage of the family assistants was in that they often helped them to find out what they wanted to know--either giving them the information directly or by sending them to the appropriate teacher or counselor.

> "Whenever I have a problem she tells me where I can get help--she helps a lot too."
>
> "They help you to find out about your status in school."
>
> "She talks to me about my schooling."
>
> "I found out some things I never knew."
>
> "She has been understanding and referred me to a school counselor where I got help."

"She helped me to learn how to get back in school."

In only eight cases did students make any negative statements about the program when asked to respond to an open-ended question asking them in what ways the program helped or hurt them. This is far fewer negative comments than were made in previous yearly evaluation studies by TLRC of the School-Home Contact program. The following are illustrative of their responses in this regard.

"I have had no contact with the family assistant." (1 respondent)

"She made me take courses I don't like." (3 responses)

"They tell our parents and it is none of their business." (4 respondents)

C. Provision of Needed Information to School Staff

As shown in Table 4, school staff by an approximate margin of 3 to 1, indicated that the family assistants provided school staff with information which helped them to assist students to better adjust in school.

Table 4: School Staff Responses to Question of Whether Family Assistants Provide Them With Information Which is Useful In Helping Students To Better Adjust In School

	No %	Yes %	Not Sure %
Coordinator Responses N = 28 Program Coordinators	25%	75%	-
Other School Staff Responses N = 42 Teachers, Counselors, etc.	9%	83%	8%
Total N = 70	16%	80%	4%

The following are position letters of high school administrators in regard to the School-Home Contact Program. These letters are illustrative of informally expressed views to TLRC evaluation staff.

High School "A"

Dear _____:

We have always maintained that total education consists of three components, i.e., community, students and curriculum. The Family Assistants have helped us tremendously in fulfilling these goals. They reinforce the educational and vocational goals that the students set for themselves. As a result, the Family Assistants have been able to present a clear picture to the parents. Parents and students have commented positively on visits made by the Family Assistants. They have developed a professional expertise in their contacts with parents and students.

The reaction of the faculty has been one of great admiration and respect for the way they have performed their duties.

Very truly yours,

Principal

High School "B"

Dear _____:

Thank you so much for your memorandum of March 22 which contained the sampling results for serviced students in the School-Home Contact Program. The data strikingly bore out what we in the program have always known:-- that bringing the home and school together provides us with one of the best ways of effecting change in student behavior and achievement. When, in addition, it is recognized that the Family Assistant in the School-Home Contact Program is brought into the situation to reach those families where all other attempts have failed and that in effect we are dealing with hard cord problems, then the value of the program as attested in your memorandum is incalculable.

Miss_____ of Teaching and Learning has visited the school and appeared quite knowledgable in terms of what we were trying to do and most understanding of the difficulties involved.

Sincerely,

Assistant Principal of Guidance

High School "C"

Dear _____:

At the conclusion of this first semester of the operation of the School-Home Contact Program in School, I want to make a special point of reporting to you how valuable I and other members of the faculty here have found the program to be.

The paraprofessionals have serviced over 300 parent referrals. Some of these have come from our own guidance service, both counselors and grade advisers, and reports have come back to them as a result of the visits which were made. The program, of course, has been especially effective in the matter of referrals of truants by our attendance office. In addition, you will be interested to know that in several cases where deans' pre-suspense hearings had earlier proved fruitless because of our inability to either contact parents or to get them to appear in school, the home contact paraprofessionals were able to establish important contacts which resulted in parental appearances here. In at least three of such cases the results were achieved through visits at night to parents who work during the day. Contacts were also made with social agencies as a result of the number of referrals.

The program has an excellent reputation with the guidance staff and with the faculty at this school in general. Teachers have noticed improvement in study and work habits of individuals who have been helped under it. I am so delighted with the general comments and the approval of the parents who have been contacted that I want to go on record as very strongly supporting the continuation of the program in the school.

Sincerely yours,

Principal

Staff Recommendations

The clearly one-over-riding recommendation made to TLRC evaluation personnel by school staff was for the program to be continued. Beyond this their recommendations were distributed with little consensus among such suggestions as increasing the extent of in-service training for assistants, obtaining more working space for assistants, and modifying organizational and hiring procedures, reduce paper work, have F.A.'s work a full day, provide provisions for more follow-up, develop more programs to place truants in after their return to school, more clearly specific guidelines of F.A.'s responsibilities. None of these later recommendations was made by more than ten or less than three staff members. Where only one or two staff members made a common recommendation no tally is reported.

D. Contributes to Positive Student Attitudes

Students and their parents tend to be positive in their ratings of the effects of the program on students getting along better with the teachers and other students and student interest in school subjects.

Table 5: Students and Parent Assessments of the Effect of the School-Home Contact Program on Student Attitudes In School

Items	Students N = 862			Parents N = 832		
	Yes	No	Don't Know	Yes	No	Don't Know
1. "...getting along better with teachers..."	68%	20.7%	11.2%	54.4%	9.2%	36.4%
2. "...getting along better with other students..."	78.2	10.9	10.9	54.7	9.4	35.8
3. "...more interested in school subjects..."	69.9	19.5	10.6	60.8	12.0	27.2

Illustrative Parent Statements: Attitudes Toward School

Generally in elaborating about the family assistants helping them to have better contact with their children's schools, the parents often made comments about the program helping their children to do better in school. The following are illustrations of parents statements.

"The program (family assistant) gave my child an incentive to do better."

"The (program) keeps my son out of trouble in school."

"My child is doing much better in school now because of the family assistant."

"The family assistant was able to bring my daughter back to school. Since she has returned her work has improved and she is more interested. My daughter meets with the family assistants once a week."

"The program should continue because the children feel more free and have more confidence."

Illustrative Student Statements: Attitudes Toward School

The students in response to open-ended questions about the family assistant program made slightly fewer positive statements about the effects on their attitudes and behavior than they did about being provided needed information. However, no negative statements were made about the program or what they did or their interest in school. The following are illustrative student comments:

"I am now more interested in school, which means I was doing better."

"My family assistant has helped me to understand myself more and to really how important my school and home are."

"She helped my teachers understand me better."

"She helped me a lot."

"They help you learn how to do things in school."

"The family assistant helped me get back to school and now I'm going to get a diploma. I'm glad."

"My average went from 67 to 84. That's good."

It seems reasonable to conclude that the School-Home Contact Program is helping to improve the attitudes of their children, particularly if such a generalization is supported by increased attendance rates, enhanced patterns of passing school subjects and patterns of retention in school similar to students not previously characterized by high rates of cutting, absenteeism and drop-out.

E. Reduction in Dropouts, Absenteeism, and School Subject Failures

1. Sample One: Before (Spring 1971) and After (Spring 1972)

a. Absenteeism

As indicated in Table 6, 950 sample students in the year serviced by a family assistant decreased their average yearly absence record down to slightly more than twenty-four and a half days of absence ($\bar{X}$=24.52) from the prior year when they were not serviced by a family assistant and

missed an average of twenty-nine days absence and twenty-four and a half days absence is not significantly different when a correlated t test is employed ($\alpha = .05$).

Table 6: A Comparison of Absence Records of Students During Year Serviced by Family Assistant (Spring 1972) and Previous Year (Spring 1971) When Not Serviced by Family Assistant

Average No. of Days Absent					
Spring 1972 Serviced by Family Assistant		Spring 1971 Not Serviced by Family Assistant			
$\bar{X}$	S.D.	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	t	
24.52	10.79	29.08	14.36	1.30	N.S.*
				$p < .05$	

19 high schools
N = 950 Students
N.S. - Not Significantly Different

b. Changes in Subjects Passed

As can be seen in Table 7, a comparison of the average number of major subjects passed by students during year serviced by family assistants (1972) was more than a third higher (average number of subjects passed 4.06) than it was during the previous year (1971 average number of subjects passed 2.85) when the same students were not serviced by family assistants.

Table 7: A Comparison of Average Number of Majors Passed by Students During Year Serviced by Family Assistant (Spring 1972) and Previous Year (Spring 1971) When Not Serviced by Family Assistant

Average Number of Majors Passed				
After Being Serviced by Family Assistant Spring 1972		Previous Year Not Serviced by Family Assistant Spring 1971		
$\bar{X}$	S.D.	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	t*
4.06	1.36	2.85	.93	4.15

19 high schools
N=950 Students
*Significantly Different Beyond .05 Level

2. Sample Two: Before (Fall 1972) and After (Fall 1973)

a. Absenteeism

As can be seen in Table 8, again there was a reduction in the rate of absenteeism after being serviced by a family assistant. There was a statistically significant drop in average number of days absent at the .05 level between the Fall 1972 and the Fall 1973.

Table 8: A Comparison of Average Number of Days Absent Before (Fall 1972) and After (Fall 1973) Being Serviced by Family Assistants

Average Number of Days Absent				
Sept. 72 - Jan 73 Serviced by F.A.		Sept 71 - Jan 72 Not Serviced by F.A.		
$\bar{X}$	S.D.	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	t*
21.12	7.53	28.10	13.00	2.23

*Significantly different beyond .05 level
t test for correlated data.
N = 850 Students, 17 high schools

b. Changes in Subjects Passed

The findings reported in Table 9, similar to the findings reported on Sample One, above, show again a reduction in the number of major school subjects failed ($p < .05$ level) which is in accord with school objectives.

Table 9: A Comparison of Average Number of Majors Passed by Students During Semester Serviced by Family Assistant (Fall 1972) and During the Previous Year (Fall 1971) When Not Serviced by Family Assistant

Average Number of Majors Passed				
After Being Serviced by Family Assistant Fall 1972		Previous Year, Not Serviced by Family Assistant Fall 1971		
$\bar{X}$	S.D.	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	t*
3.99	.39	2.52	.47	9.96

17 high schools, N=850 Students
*Significantly different beyond .05 level

3. Sample Three: Before (Spring 1972) and After (Spring 1973)

a. Absenteeism

The third sample resulted in findings which is also in accord with the findings from the first sample. The third sample of 2,236 students which covers a later period shows a significant reduction in absenteeism (significant beyond the .05 level), between the fall period (Sept. 72 - Jan., 73) when the students were not serviced by a family assistant to the winter period (Jan 73 - May 73) when family assistants made contact with the students and/or their families (See Table 10).

Table 10: A Comparison of Absenteeism Rates of Students Before (Spring 1972) and After (Spring 1973) Being Serviced by Family Assistants: Third Sample

Average No. Days Absent				
Sept. 72 - Jan 73		Jan 73 - May 73		
Not Serviced by Family Assistants		Serviced by Family Assistants		
$\bar{X}$	S.D.	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	t*
27.72	10.09	21.26	8.05	5.48

N = 2,236 Students
*Significantly different beyond .05 level

b. Changes in Proportions of Subjects Passed

The findings reported in Table 11, are the result of the first data obtained in this study which are not clearly supportive of the program achieving some aspect of its objectives. Contrary to the findings from samples one and two, sample three does not show a significant increase in the number of subjects passed after being seen by the family assistants. Perhaps this is due to the fact that this third sample was not seen by the family assistants until later in the school year and sufficient time had not elapsed to see any statistically significant effects at the .05 level. There was a drop in absenteeism as reported in the previous section.

Table 11: Percentage of Majors Passed by Students During Semester Serviced by Family Assistant (Jan 73 - Apr 73) and During Prior Semester (Sept 72 - Jan 73)

Percentage of Majors Passed				
After Being Serviced by Family Assistant		Prior Semester, Not Serviced by Family Assistant		
Sept. 72 - Jan 73		Jan 73 - May 73		
$\bar{X}$	S.D.	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	t
51.04	17.43	53.04	14.69	1.89 N.S.*

N = 2456
N.S. = Not significantly different (.05 level)

C. Dropout Rate

As can be seen in Table 12, for those students referred to Family Assistants--who are all high risk potential dropouts, i.e. characterized by high absenteeism, class-cutting, low achievement or serious behavioral problems and that is why for the most part they were referred--the dropout rate was 9.3%. School dropout rates for the other students in these high schools for the same period will not be available until late summer or fall 1973. The latest figures available from the Bureau of Attendance at the time of the writing of this report covers the 1971 - 72 school year and not broken down by the school.

For the period 1971 - 72 the dropout rate for the city excluding Richmond was 12.69. Richmond was excluded because no schools on the School-Home Contact Program were in this area. If the 1972-73 school year dropout rate for the city of New York should remain the same as the previous years 1971-72 then the dropout rate for students serviced by Family Assistants represents a significantly lower level ($p < .05$). It is impossible to be definitive in this respect until the final dropout data is available in the early fall of 1973.

Since norm group data is not available to TLRC at this time, conclusions must be very tentative. By early fall or perhaps late summer a more definitive statement will be possible. However, given the high risk nature of the students serviced, i.e. those with high absenteeism, class-cutting, and school failure problems, this 9.3% dropout rate does not seem high. Furthermore, the 9.3% dropout rate includes those who were over 17 years of age and in some schools (6) no effort was made to bring this group back into high school.

Table 12: Dropout Rates of Students Serviced by Family Assistants: Third Sample: N = 4,928 Students

	Total No. Dropped Out	Total Percentage Dropped Out
Serviced by F.A. (N = 4928 Students)	462	9.3%
City-Wide*		
Academic Programs:	26,912	
Vocational Programs: (N = 258,183 Students)	4,252	12.07%**

*Information provided by the Bureau of Attendance
**City dropout including Richmond

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of Findings:

In summary, findings of this study are as follows:

1. The overwhelming proportion of both parents (75.9%) and students (72.2%) serviced indicated that the Family Assistant let them know when their children had problems in school. (See Table 1.)

2. From the referred list ninety-four percent (94%) of the parents confirmed that Family Assistants contacted them. The average number of family contacts made was 2.48, which was slightly higher than the previous year. (See Table 2.)

3. Both parents (73.1%) and students (77.3%) serviced by the program also tended to indicate that the Family Assistants kept them well informed about how well their children were doing in school. (See Table 3.)

4. From 75% to 83% of the school staff participating in the program, in two samples, indicated that they were provided with family information they needed by Family Assistants, which helped them to assist students to better adjust in school. (See Table 4.) The high school administrators were generally very favorable toward the idea of continuing the School-Home Contact Program. The major recommendations of the staff emphasized continuing and expanding the program, procedures, more in-service training, increased staff, and increased working hours for Family Assistants.

5. A large proportion of the students served (68% - 69.9%) indicated that they are getting along better with teachers and other students and that they are now more interested in school subjects. This was confirmed by the parents (54.4-60.8). (See Table 5.)

6. Effects on Dropout:

   a. Absenteeism:

      Based on three samples (N = 950, N = 850 and N = 2,236) absenteeism was significantly reduced at the $p < .05$ level in two of the three cases. In each case a comparison was made between students serviced by Family Assistants and a prior period when they were not serviced. (See Tables 6. 8, and 10.)

b. Reduction in Subject Failures:

In two out of three samples there was a significant reduction in the school subjects failed. In the sample when there was no significant reduction, the students were served late in the school year and possibly it was too soon for achievement effects to be seen. (See Tables 7, 9, and 11.)

c. Actual Dropout Rates:

The actual official dropout rate for the sample students serviced in 28 high schools of this program (N = 4,928) was 9.3%. School dropout rates for the other students in these high schools for the same period will not be available until late summer or fall, 1973. The latest figures available from the Bureau of Attendance at the time of the writing of this report cover the 1971-72 school year and are not broken down by the schools and subjects of this evaluation report.

Since norm group data is not available to TLRC at this time, conclusions must be tentative. By early fall or perhaps late summer a more definite statement will be possible. However, given the high risk nature of the students served, i.e. those with high absenteeism, class-cutting and school failure problems, this 9.3% dropout rate is significantly lower. Furthermore, the 9.3% dropout rate includes those who were over 17 years of age and in some schools (6) no effort was made to bring this group back into high school.

Conclusions:

It was concluded, based on the quantitative and qualitative findings of this study that the School-Home Contact Program has achieved the first four of its objectives. The program, for the students it served has:

1. Helped to bridge the gap between the school and the home.
2. Provided parents with needed information to help their children in school.
3. Provided school staff with needed information from the home which was useful in helping pupils and providing services.
4. Helped to produce more positive attitudes among problem students toward school subjects, teachers and other students.

At the time of the writing of this report, validly comparable norm group data on actual dropout is not available. The Bureau of Attendance states that such dropout data will be available by late summer or early fall. However, findings related to two conditions known to effect dropout status, absenteeism and number of subjects passed were available at the time of this report. Based on the findings that absenteeism was significantly reduced in two large samples (N = 850 and N = 2,236) and that the number of classes failed were also significantly reduced in two large samples (N = 850, N = 950) and dropout rate was only 9.3% in a total population of 4,928 students, it is concluded that dropout rates are being reduced in this high risk category of students.*

Recommendations:

1. It is recommended that, given adequate funding resources, the School-Home Contact Program be continued.

2. If it is continued, given the availability of resources, it is recommended that the Family Assistants be employed on a full-time basis; not on half-days.

3. It is also recommended that in-service training program give continued, if not greater, emphasis to detailing to Family Assistants their responsibilities and where their authority ends. This is in accord with staff recommendations. Guidelines should be emphasized.

4. It would be helpful if work space and telephone facilities in many of the high schools could be increased.

5. Many of the high school coordinators experienced difficulties because they had so many other duties such being assistant principals, head counselors, and so forth. It would be helpful if in each school the coordinators were given added time to devote to the School-Home Contact Program.

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* In other words, it is concluded that Objective Five, the reduction of dropouts, is also being accomplished under the School-Home Contact Program.

SCHOOL-HOME CONTACT PROGRAM

ADMINISTRATIVE QUESTIONNAIRE

Name_____

Position_____

1. In your opinion, what do you believe to be the major strengths of the School-Home Contact Program?

2. In your opinion, what do you believe to be the major weaknesses of the School-Home Contact Program?

3. What, if any recommendations do you have for improving the School-Home Contact Program?

SCHOOL-HOME CONTACT PROGRAM

4. Does the Family Assistant Program provide needed information to school staff which is useful in helping students to better adjust to school?

Yes _____ No _____

5. To whom are the Family Assistants assigned and what are their duties?

6. How are students referred to the Family Assistant? (Please briefly describe the process by which students are referred.)

7. After referral what procedures are followed? (Please briefly describe.)

8. In your opinion do you feel that there is any positive correlation between improvement in attendance, academic achievement and the support of the Family Assistant?

Appendix B (English)

TEACHING & LEARNING

SCHOOL-HOME CONTACT PROGRAM

PARENT EVALUATION OF FAMILY ASSISTANT

Name_____ Home Telephone_____

1. How many times has the Family Assistant been to your home, or spoken to you at home or in school? Number _____

2. Does the Family Assistant keep you well informed about how your child (children) is doing in school? Don't know ( ) Yes ( ) No ( )

3. Do you think the Family Assistant understands what kind of help your child (children) needs. Don't know ( ) Yes ( ) No ( )

4. Does the Family Assistant let you know when your child has problems at school? Don't know ( ) Yes ( ) No ( )

5. Do you think your child (children) seem to be getting along better with teachers since you have been working with the Family Assistant? Don't know ( ) Yes ( ) No ( )

6. Do they (does he/she) seem to be getting along better with other students since you have been working with the Family Assistant? Don't know ( ) Yes ( ) No ( )

7. Do you think your child (children) are more interested in their school subjects since you have been working with the Family Assistant? Don't know ( ) Yes ( ) No ( )

8. Please feel free to make any suggestions that you feel would make the program better. (If you need more room, please use the back.)

9. Do you feel this program should be continued?

Yes ____ No ____

Why?

Programme de Contact
Ecôle-Maison

EVALUATION PARENTALE DE L'ASSISTANTE FAMILIALE

Nom_____

1. Combien de fois l'Assistante Familiale etait chez vous ou vous ait parlé à la maison ou à l'ecôle? Nombre_____

2. Est-ce que l'Assistante Familiale vous tient au courant vis a vis le progres de votre enfant a l'écôle? Sais pas___ Oui___ Non___

3. Pensez vous que l"Assistante Familiale comprend la façon dont votre enfant a besoin d'aide? Sais pas___ Oui___ Non___

4. Est-ce que l'Assistante Familiale vous previent quand votre enfant a des problèmes a l'écôle? Sais pas___ Oui___ Non___

5. Pensez vous que votre enfant s'entend mieux avec ses professeurs depuis que vous travaillez avec l'Assistante Familiale? Sais pas___ Oui___ Non___

6. Est-ce que votre enfant s'entend mieux avec les autres eleves depuis que vous travaillez avec l'Assistante Familiale? Sais pas___ Oui___ Non___

7. Pensez-vous que votre enfant montre d'avantage d'interêt dans son travail a l'écôle depuis que vous travaillez avec l'Assistante Familiale? Sais pas___ Oui___ Non___

8. A vôtre avis, que pourrait-on faire pour ameliorer le programme? (Ecrivez de l'autre côte de ce papier si vous avez besoin d'avantage d'éspace.)

9. Pensez-vous que le programme devrait être continué? Oui_____ Non_____

Pourquoi?

Nombre d'enfants a l'ecole_____

SCHOOL-HOME CONTACT PROGRAM

STUDENT EVALUATION OF FAMILY ASSISTANT

School _____ Home Telephone _____

1. How many times has the Family Assistant been to your home, or spoken to you at home or in school? Number _____

2. Does the Family Assistant keep your parents well informed about how you are doing in school? Yes ( ) No ( ) Don't know ( )

3. Do you think the Family Assistant understands what kind of help you need? Yes ( ) No ( ) Don't know ( )

4. Does the Family Assistant let your parents know when you have problems at school? Yes ( ) No ( ) Don't know ( )

5. Do you think you are getting along better with teachers since you have been working with the Family Assistant? Yes ( ) No ( ) Don't know ( )

6. Do you seem to be getting along better with other students since you have been working with the Family Assistant? Yes ( ) No ( ) Don't know ( )

7. Are you more interested in school subjects since you have been working with the Family Assistant? Yes ( ) No ( ) Don't know ( )

8. Please feel free to make suggestions that you feel would make the program better. (If you need more room, please use the back.)

9. Do you feel that the Family Assistant has been of any help to you in anyway.

Yes ____ No ____

Which way?

Programme de Contact
Ecôle-Maison

EVALUATION PAR L'ELEVE DE L'ASSISTANTE FAMILIALE

1. Combien de fois l'Assistante Familiale a-t-elle visitée votre maison ou parlé avec vous, soît à la maison, soît à l'écôle? Nombre_____

2. Est-ce que l'Assistante Familiale tiens vos parents au courant vis a vis votre progres à l'écôle? Oui___ Non___ Sais Pas___

3. Pensez-vous que l'Assistante Familiale comprend le genre d'aide qu'il vous faut? Oui___ Non___ Sais pas___

4. Est-ce que l'Assistante Familiale prévient vos parents quand vous avez des problèmes à l'écôle? Oui___ Non___ Sais pas___

5. Pensez-vous que vous vous entendez mieux avec vos professeurs depuis que vous travaillez avec l'Assistante Familiale? Oui___ Non___ Sais Pas___

6. Est-ce que vous vous entendez mieux avec les autres éléves depuis que vous travaillez avec l'Assistante Familiale? Oui___ Non___ Sais pas___

7. Est-ce que votre travail à l'écôle vous interesse d'avantage depuis que vous travaillez avec l'Assistante Familiale? Oui___ Non___ Sais pas___

8. A votre avis, que pourrait-on faire pour ameliorer le programme? (Ecrivez au verso, si vous n'avez pas assez d'espace.)

9. Pensez-vous que l'Assistante Familiale vous a aidé? Oui_____ Non_____

De quelle facon?

Appendix D

School-Home Contact Program
Evaluation Study 1972-1973

DATE _____

NAME OF SCHOOL _____

NAME OF COORDINATOR _____

1. Number of Family Assistants _____

2. Names and phone numbers of Family Assistants(Where they can be reached) (No Family Assistants will be contacted unless permission is previously obtained from the coordinator).

NAME	PHONE NUMBER